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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3300
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5080
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1357
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0615
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4190
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9491
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA'S PRONOUNCEMENTS TO
DECONGEST MANIK FARM CAMPS UNFULFILLED

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1. (SBU) Summary: ADCM attended meeting September 16 called by UN Resident Coordinator to brief Heads of Mission and aid agencies on recent IPD returns. Starting on September 11, approximately 2,7000 IDPs were moved from Manik Farm in Vavuniya and are currently being held in closed transit sites (no freedom of movement) in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara districts while local security forces conduct additional security screening. UNHCR confirmed that prior to this September 11 movement, only 6,200 persons have been released from Manik Farm to their homes or to host families. UN reports that yesterday the host family option has been stopped by the GSL. UNHCR anticipates that a maximum of 16,000 persons will be resettled by the GSL prior to the onset of the monsoons in early October. With significant portions of Manik Farm identified by a UNICEF groundwater survey as becoming uninhabitable with the rains, coupled with the failure of the GSL to decongest the camp, a dire situation in Manik Farm is predicted. End summary

Newly released IDPs are in closed transit sites

2. (SBU) The GSL announced last week that 9,900 persons would be returned from Manik Farm to their homes. On September 11, 2,700 IDPs were moved from Manik Farm sites to Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara districts. As of September 16, all 2,700 persons are being held in transit sites in these districts without freedom of movement. In Ampara, the IDPs are being held in an abandoned army camp, directly connected to the Akkairaipattu Sri Lanka Army camp. UN resrep stated that the reason given by the new competent authority, the Vanni Security Forces Commander, for not releasing the IDPs is that even though they have cleared security screening conducted in Vavuniya, the quote district people know better unquote. The UN has discussed this with Basil Rajapakse who claims this situation will prevail for just 3-4 days. The current situation falls short of the

GSL's pronouncements in the media last week that 9,900 persons from Manik Farm would be returned to their homes this week.

13. (SBU) ADCM asked UNHCR to clarify exactly how many IDPs have been released from Manik Farm prior to this most recent release September 11. UNHCR stated that 200 IDPs have been returned to their homes and 6,000 have been released to host families. With the population of Manik Farm around 220,000 persons, the GSL's actions to date fall far short of the decongestion which needs to take place before the monsoon rains begin.

Donor support to new closed sites?

14. (SBU) The UN stated that they and donor countries will need to decide what sort of support, if any, is provided to the new district closed transit sites and for how long. IOM and UNICEF reported that they are in the process of considering whether they should provide food and logistical support to the new transit sites. The UN stated that the GSL may ask for support to create new closed camps in the districts as a way to decongest Manik Farm. Among the countries represented at the meeting: Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, EU, India, UK and US definitively stated they would not support building new closed camps outside of Vavuniya to accommodate the Manik Farm IDPs. The India DCM voiced his Government's displeasure with the quote nasty surprise unquote with the closed transit camps and said we are all faced with a moral hazard and that the GSL has shown quote despicable tendencies unquote. Japanese Ambassador alone stated that moving the IDPs out to

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better conditions was a positive step, and that they would support the closed transit sites while putting pressure on the GSL.

15. (SBU) ADCM outlined options that Post has put forward regarding freedom of movement and that the USG is considering whether to maintain the status quo of assistance to the closed camps or redirecting assistance to supporting returns, host family and open camps. All present, except Japan, voiced their agreement with the latter approach, while recognizing the reality that support will need to be continued to Manik Farm for the duration of the monsoon season.

Host Family Option off the table

16. (SBU) UN resrep reported that the GSL has stopped the host family option as of September 15, even though this option was announced by Minister Samarasinghe at the Human Rights Council. It had been reported last week that advertisements had been placed in vernacular papers asking host family relatives to apply if they had relatives in the camps. With a requirement for eight GSL signatures to approve, this option would likely not result in major releases in the short-term.

IDPs Restive

17. (SBU) UNHCR reported that the IDPs are becoming frustrated with the situation -- those that are being held in the closed transit camps in the districts as well as those in Manik Farm. UNICEF stated that the level of anger among the IDPs is growing, people are desperate to get out and riots may occur in the future.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: UN Undersecretary Pascoe arrives tonight and will be traveling to Mannar, Jaffna and Vavuniya. He will also be meeting with Basil Rajapaksa, the Secretary of Defense and the President and will raise these issues. UN

plans to raise these issues during his visit. Overall, there is a broad consensus among the countries represented -- other than Japan -- that we should continue providing humanitarian assistance to Manik Farm through the monsoon season; that we should phase down our support to Manik Farm in line with the GSL 180 day plan o/a December; that we should support returns and short transit; and that donors should not support closed camps. The dilemma will come when Manik Farm is flooded and because significant decongestion has not taken place, we can anticipate that donors will be pressured to support temporary closed camps.

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